



SENATOR RUNNER'S WEEK IN REVIEW

A WEEKLY REVIEW THAT WILL KEEP YOU INFORMED AND UP-TO-DATE



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Waste Watcher: Bon Voyage

The scene was set for the state to say bon voyage to some foster parents as they set sail on a taxpayer funded cruise to Mexico, that is until the media got word of it. According to the *Bakersfield Californian* (August 31, 2005), the director of Kern county's Department of Human Services ***"earmarked \$5,000 so seven Kern County foster moms and dads can bone up on the latest parenting techniques aboard a Carnival Cruise ship on a seven-day trip to Mexico and get some much-needed R&R."*** Two weeks later, however, after facing public scrutiny, the *Bakersfield Californian* (September 14, 2005) reported that Kern County's welfare director had ***"decided to pay for it personally."***

The cruise came about as a result of a simple request to the head of the county agency who said ***"a foster parent group asked her and she said why not?"*** Why not? I guess they didn't anticipate such a strong reaction from angry taxpayer's whose dollars were floating the bill for the cruise. The justification for funding the trip lied in the fact that participants were going to endure 12 long hours of training throughout the duration of the 7 day cruise. That's approximately two hours of intense training everyday. How were these poor parents suppose to get any rest?

While \$5,000 was set aside for the trip, only seven parents signed up to go, originally costing the taxpayers \$4,550. I wonder if the welfare director thinks it is such a deal now that she is picking up the tab. One Kern cruise goer believes that she's entitled to the trip and states that, ***"The word 'cruise' is what has everybody in an uproar. But what is the difference? We go to conferences that would cost more than this cruise."*** You do? Maybe that's why state officials decided to launch an investigation into how the county is spending its state and federal dollars.

While, the welfare director is trying to rectify the situation by covering the cost of the cruise herself, it may not end the controversy. One Supervisor is asking the board to tighten controls over travel spending; however, some board members still don't see a problem in having the taxpayers foot the bill. One board member remarked that, ***"he is saddened by the furor because he did not believe there was anything wrong with the trip."*** Maybe he should split the cost with the welfare director and see how much he likes paying to essentially send seven people on vacation.

News of the Week

[Jessica's Law Rolls In Big](#)

[Governor Cruises to Reelection](#)

[Implementing Prop 83-Jessica's Law Will Begin](#)

[The Governor's Decisive U-Turn](#)

[California Legislature Will Have Same Party Mix,
Different Flavor](#)

[Runners Urge Local Officials to Act on
Illegal Immigration Problem](#)

[Winner Runner Recaps Election at AV Chamber](#)

[Smyth To Leave Santa Clarita City Council
for State Assembly](#)

While no one disagrees with the fact that foster parents deserve vacations, the problem lies in the fact that taxpayers should not have to pay for it. In a time when the state is under a lot of financial strain, taxpayers should not be floating the bill for illegitimate expenses. In this particular case, the taxpayers won, proving that citizens can provoke change in the government. The welfare director is now rightly stuck paying for the cruise, and left hoping that these parents do more than sip margaritas while they sail through the waters of Mexico.

**If you would like to contact Senator Runner, please click
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OFFICES

Capitol

State Capitol, Room 4066
Sacramento, CA 95814
Phone: 916-651-4017
Fax: 916-445-4662

Antelope Valley

848 W. Lancaster Blvd, Ste 101
Lancaster, CA 93534
Phone: 661-729-6232
Fax: 661-729-1683

Victorville

Victorville City Hall
14343 Civic Drive, First Floor
Victorville, CA 92392
Phone: 760-843-8414
Fax: 760-843-8348

Santa Clarita – San Fernando Valley – Ventura County

Santa Clarita City Hall
23920 Valencia Blvd., Suite 250
Santa Clarita, CA 91355
Phone: 661-286-1471 Santa
Clarita Valley
Phone: 661-286-1472 San
Fernando Valley & Ventura County
Fax: 661-286-2543